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**The DHS Connection
Tennessee Department of Human
Services**

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Editor's note: This issue of the quarterly departmental newsletter includes annual report information and will take the place of the Fall 2001 issue of the publication, *The Record*.



From the Commissioner

This issue of the DHS Connection will serve as our FY 2000/2001 Annual Report. I want to thank all Department of Human Services employees for your hard work, patience and diligence during this time when we have had to monitor expenditures very closely. Our programs continue to remain on track and that is because of your dedication to the people we serve.

Last year was a very busy time for us. Some of the highlights include:

- Launching a web-based Child Care provider directory.
- The General Assembly changed the Child Care Rated Licensing System to a voluntary program.
- Improved child/caregiver ratios for infants, toddlers and two-year-olds were delayed once again, but finally took effect February 1, 2002.
- The Tennessee Council for the Hearing Impaired (TCHI) is now the Tennessee Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (TCDHH).
- Tennessee was recognized by the United States Department of Agriculture for achieving its

highest payment accuracy rate ever in the Food Stamp Program at 94.29%.

- The Families First program was recognized nationally for the second year in a row for placing 65% of welfare recipients into jobs.
- In September 2000, license revocation notices were mailed to almost 11,000 parents who were delinquent in child support, resulting in \$1.1 million in payments. Tennessee's population is growing. More people means there are more Tennesseans who need the social services offered by our Department. It's difficult to maintain the same level and quality of services when we have to serve more people with the same or less money.

Budget reductions present us with a bigger challenge. By now, you have heard about cuts in our Department that total nearly \$4 million. We have to play with the hand we are dealt. This means each of us will have to try harder to serve our customers within the funds we have been allocated. It is not going to be easy, but I am confident that we can work as a team and continue to accomplish much good, even in a time of adversity.

Natasha K. Metcalf



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Division of Child Support Services

Mike Adams
Assistant Commissioner

In recognition of the impact that child support services have on a large segment of Tennessee's population, Child Support Services was established as a unique Division within the Department of Human Services on February 1, 2001.

Child Support Services was initially a section in the Department's Legal Division and most recently a section in the Department's Family Assistance Division. Tennessee's Child Support program is administered by DHS through contracts with 20 district attorneys, two juvenile courts, eight private contractors and program staff.

Services include:

- Locating non-custodial parents
- Establishing paternity
- Establishing and enforcing financial and medical support orders
- Reviewing and adjusting support orders
- Collecting and distributing child support payments

Accomplishments:

- The license revocation process produced \$1.1 million in child support collections.
- Analysis to prepare for the next round of credit bureau and license revocation referrals is in process.

- Child support collections reached an all time high of \$327 million.
- Unemployment Compensation Offset collections reached an all time high of \$4.1 million.
- Employers reported a weekly average of 11,364 new employees through Tennessee's New Hire Program.
- State legislation passed allowing use of the National Medical Support Notice effective July 1, 2002.
- The Administrative Order Process has been implemented.
- Treasury Offset collections for tax year 2000, reached an all time high of \$31.7 million.

The Division of Rehabilitation Services

Carl Brown
Assistant Commissioner

The major objective of this division is to assist Tennesseans with disabilities gain employment, live as independently as possible, and to receive timely and accurate decisions on their applications for Social Security Disability Insurance Benefits or Supplemental Security Income benefits.

Vocational Rehabilitation Services

This program provides individualized services for people with disabilities. Rehabilitation personnel prepare individuals to enter or return to employment by providing services such as physical or mental restoration, training, job placement and other services.

Accomplishments:

- Provided vocational rehabilitation services to 53,781 individuals with disabilities. 6,175 achieved successful outcomes. Both actions exceeded the goals (50,000 and 6,129) for these categories.
- Annualized earnings of the 6,175 individuals rehabilitated increased by \$79,536,496.
- Continued the customer satisfaction surveys contract with the University of Memphis (achieved a 96.6% satisfaction rating).
- Increased the number of Transition School-to-Work students with disabilities served by expanding the case manager cooperative agreements with local education agencies for a total of 60 case managers.
- Expanded partnership with each of the Workforce Development Career Centers to include the co-location of a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor at each center.
- Expanded and enhanced computer technology (automation throughout the Division).
- Continued development of Case Management and Tracking System (CMATS) that will electronically link all components of the Statewide Workforce Investment System.

Rehabilitation Facilities

The Tennessee Rehabilitation Center (TRC) is a comprehensive residential rehabilitation facility, which serves a statewide population and has a program capacity of 198 customers. Comprehensive vocational evaluation, work adjustment, occupational skill-training, medical rehabilitation, visually impaired services and services for persons with traumatic brain injury are offered.

Accomplishments:

- Served 1,229 individuals with disabilities representing the highest number served in the 24 year history of the facility.

(Vocational Rehabilitation continued)

- Opened new vocational training program in Nurse Assistant Occupational Skills Training.
- Expanded the Center's Crisis Response Plan to include a specific crisis response team and procedures to respond to reports of missing students and armed intruders.
- Continued campus security upgrade project, which included security perimeter fence, improved lighting, security camera in the residential program, door alarm system for the dormitories as well as dormitory security check in stations.
- New legislation was passed to rename the Tennessee Vocational Training Centers across the state to the Tennessee Rehabilitation Center at "the specific city location."

Tennessee Technology Access Project (TTAP)

The Tennessee Technology Access Project, provides Tennesseans who have a disability and their families with timely, comprehensive information about assistive technology devices and related services. TTAP also provides funding to four assistive technology centers located in Jackson, Nashville, Chattanooga and Knoxville.

Accomplishments:

- Provided funding totaling more than \$220,000.00 to four assistive technology centers across the state for TTAP related activities including:
 - Public Awareness Activities
 - Technical Assistance and Training
 - Minority Outreach
 - Dissemination of Technology
 - Related Information
 - Consumer Advocacy
 - Developing and Maintaining Partnerships and Cooperative Initiatives.

Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired

This section provides specialized services to assist Tennessee citizens who are blind or visually impaired. Services are provided on an individualized basis. Specific program areas include Vocational Rehabilitation, Rehabilitation Teaching, Independent Living Services to Older Blind Individuals, and Tennessee Business Enterprises (TBE).

Accomplishments:

- Successfully placed 324 customers into employment.
- Approximately 500 cases were closed through the Rehabilitation Teaching Program.
- TBE operates 57 vending facilities.
- Strategic plan was developed for TBE.
- Web site was developed that allows TBE managers to file reports and pay fees on-line.
- New automated client tracking system (ARTS) was developed for Rehabilitation Teacher Program.
- TBE Annual Earnings per Blind Worker:

2000-\$42,209

2001-\$38,500

Disability Determination Services (DDS)

DDS makes disability determination decisions on Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) claims and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) claims. This program is 100 percent federally funded by the Social Security Administration.

Accomplishments:

- DDS Training Staff was honored with four awards throughout the year for comprehensive and innovative program training, including the prestigious SSA Associate Commissioner's Citation.

- Processed 1,386 cases for terminally ill claimants.
- Recruited, hired and trained 70 new disability claims examiners.
- Agency receipts rose 5% over the previous fiscal year.
- Processed 111,446 applications (highest number ever).

Tennessee Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (TCDHH)

The TCDHH, promotes the rights and interests of deaf and hard of hearing persons and coordinates service efforts in their behalf by various service agencies.

Accomplishments:

- The Tennessee Council for the Hearing Impaired changed its name to the Tennessee Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.
- In coordination with the Tennessee Department of Correction, established a list authorizing members of the council to visit deaf or hard of hearing inmates in state prisons.
- Provided real time closed captioning of Governor Sundquist's State of the State Address.

The Division of Adult & Family Services

Ed Lake

Assistant Commissioner

Families First

Families First continues to see success in moving families from welfare to self-sufficiency. We have been recognized two years in a row for high performance in the percentage of recipients that enter the workforce. We have seen participants obtain and keep jobs at a higher rate than employers who hire off the street. Families First provides the necessary basic skills and job skills training; support services (child care and

transportation); and problem solving services (counseling for learning disabilities, domestic violence, mental health and substance abuse).

In return, participants agree to go to work or training full-time. The program is time limited to 18 months at a time with a lifetime time limit of 60 months.

Caseload Statistics

- Since its inception, Families First has served over 195,000 families.
- Only 3% of the original September 1996 caseload have received assistance continuously, and these families are likely to be exempt from work requirements.
- 69% of the 195,000 families served have cases that are now closed.
- Only one third of all closures return to the program.
- 68% (103,707) received Families First only once.
- Participants received assistance an average of 9.9 months each time they were on the program.
- The majority (60%) of those with a time limit leave the program within 6 months

(Source: UT Center for Business and Economic Research)

Accomplishments:

- Began offering statewide counseling services for hard-to-serve customers. Services are provided by DHS Family Services Counselors and Drug and Alcohol Specialists.
- Improved transportation infrastructure through our own services and through partnership with the Tennessee Department of Transportation and the Federal Transportation Administration.
- Revamped numerous training and work components to improve results.

Medicaid/TennCare

The Department of Finance and Administration (F&A) contracts with DHS to determine Medicaid Eligibility for more than 40 different Medicaid eligible groups. These groups include Families First, Nursing Home, Medically Needy individuals and Families and Children groups whose income is below the poverty income level. Once eligible for Medicaid, an individual is automatically enrolled in TennCare. Tennessee has 88% of its children currently insured.

The DHS Medicaid Eligibility Section insures that Medicaid policies are accurate and conform to federal and state statute. They respond to questions from the local county offices, the legislature and constituents. Staff work to:

- Ensure Medicare payments are paid in an accurate and timely manner by the state. This section makes provisions for the Qualified Medicare Beneficiary (QMB) and Special Low-Income Medicare Beneficiary (SLMB) services.
- Manage the QMB Hotline which disseminates QMB/SLMB application information and solves premium problems.
- Makes decisions on incapacity status for Families First parents.

Emergency Shelter Grant Program (ESGP)

The Emergency Shelter Grant Program provides funding to local governments and private, non-profit service providers to assist homeless people in Tennessee.

Accomplishments:

- \$1.3 million was made available in Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funding to 31 agencies, including 7 local

governments.

- Over 31,000 homeless persons received emergency shelter and support services statewide.

Refugee Social Services (RSS)

The Refugee Social Services program provides grant funds to non-profit agencies and local governments to assist political refugees being resettled in Tennessee.

Accomplishments:

- Over \$1.6 million in federal funds was made available to 9 agencies statewide that served over 5,000 clients.
- Exceeded federal performance targets in helping refugees obtain early employment at good starting wages, with very low utilization of public benefits.

Social Service Block Grant (SSBG) Program

SSBG Adult Services target current and former Adult Protective Service clients to prevent further abuse, neglect, and exploitation, while allowing participating individuals to maintain the highest level of independence possible.

Accomplishments:

- Funded 33 contract programs statewide to provide 3,020 low income and disabled Tennesseans with Homemaker and Adult Day Care Services.

- \$3.5 million in Federal and State funds were used to leverage an additional \$873,000 in local funds.

Community Service Block Grant (CSBG)**Accomplishments:**

- Directed \$10.5 million in federal grant funds through 21 participating agencies reaching all 95 counties.
- 127,000 low-income eligible Tennesseans received services through the CSBG program ranging from Emergency Assistance through nutrition and budgeting activities to GED preparation and Employment programs.
- Tennessee's implementation of the federally-required CSBG performance management system received a national award.

Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)**Accomplishments:**

- Provided home energy utility bill assistance to over 115,000 low income eligible Tennesseans.
- During a year of unusual increases in home energy costs, the Department, through its statewide network of 20 Community Action and Human Resource Agencies, successfully managed over \$28 million in LIHEAP funds, which included a record release of \$9.7 million in emergency contingency funds.

Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP)**Accomplishments:**

- Weatherized the homes of 2,279 low income Tennesseans, reaching all 95 counties, thereby reducing long term home energy costs for vulnerable elderly and low income individuals and families.

Adult Protective Service (APS)

APS provides assistance to vulnerable adults who are abused, neglected, or financially exploited and unable to protect themselves due to mental or physical impairments or advanced age.

Accomplishments :

- Sixty two percent (62%) of the accepted reports were valid and required protective services.
- 8,307 adults received protective services and 5,711 new investigations were completed.
- Performance reviews found that the number of cases closed with risks to the client reduced improved by 14% and the quality of investigations improved in 20% of the cases.
- Adult Protection Act changes improved access to financial records and other information pertinent to APS investigations, and eliminated duplication of investigations in facilities operated by the Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities.

•Program management was streamlined to maximize statewide consistency of performance expectations, direct program support, communications, service delivery, and coordination of resources to respond to expanding program needs.

- Improved interagency coordination to better protect adults at risk through implementation of an agreement with the Department of Health on facility investigations, interagency collaboration to improve the response to abuse, and by working with District Attorneys to reduce barriers to prosecution.

•Assured that Tennessee's Long Term Care initiative would consider the service needs of APS clients.

- The Ninth Annual Elder Abuse Institute, supported through a partnership with Tennessee State University and DHS, provided national experts and training for community agencies and APS staff, with the focus on hoarding behaviors, domestic violence, and forensic evidence.
- The Intake system was preserved using alternate technology.
- Development of the capability for online review of Intake operations statewide and for documenting intake information efficiently.

Food Stamps

The Food Stamp Program provides nutritional assistance benefits for children and families, the elderly, the disabled, unemployed and working families.

A total of over \$36,000,000 is issued in Food Stamp benefits each month. In federal fiscal year 2001, an average of 221,830 households representing approximately 510,500 persons received an average monthly benefit of about \$166.

Accomplishments:

- Achieved a 94.29% payment accuracy rate, the highest rate ever achieved. As a result, Tennessee was awarded a \$1.2 million high performance bonus by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Child Care

The Child Care program plans, implements, and coordinates activities and programs in the child care system, which are focused on increasing child care quality, accessibly, and availability.

Accomplishments:

- Eleven Child Care Resource Centers provided on-site technical assistance, lending library materials and resources and training to 3,269 unduplicated child care facilities (DHS and Department of Education licensed agencies, registered providers, and unregulated providers) representing 6,848 unduplicated staff. 181 children with disabilities were cared for in these programs.
- 81 providers received small quality grants to purchase developmentally appropriate supplies and equipment, develop a parent education/involvement program or increase staff training through in-service or conference participation (Total grant funds-\$158,623).

- 32 child care providers received grant funds to help them maintain regulation as a licensed or registered provider or move to a new status (i.e., family home to group home). 124 new spaces were created (Grant funds-\$61,271).
- 561 new homes registered with 1,088 homes in active caseload. This represents a capacity to care for 4,352 children.
- 12 Child Care Assessment Units established with 82 staff to conduct approximately 12,000 – 15,000 observations and assessments. 80 Assessors trained to reach 85% reliability on a minimum of one Environment Rating Scale representing 2,560 hours of training. 40 Assessors have been trained to reach 85% reliability on three scales for 3,840 training hours.
- 3,695 providers completed TECTA training in 2001 (1,966 completed a 30 hour orientation and 1,729 completed an academic course).

Tennessee Child Care Facilities Corporation

The Tennessee Child Care Facilities Corporation, a quasi-state agency is designed to assist in the enhancement, expansion, and creation of child care facilities through the issuing of loan guarantees, direct loans, and corporate/community partnership grants.

Accomplishments:

- Two corporate/community partnership grants totaling \$100,000 were awarded in 2001 to meet licensure and standard requirements.
- Formed a partnership with the Tennessee Small Business Development Centers/Tennessee Board of Regents to provide business planning orientation classes to potential owners and managers of child care facilities to increase business knowledge and skills in operating a business.
- Created a pilot project for the Community and Corporate Child Care Program.



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Office of Program Integrity

Ortaeina Acidera, Director

Internal Audit

Perform audits/reviews of the various programs administered by the department, serves as the liaison to the Comptroller of the Treasury, Division of Audit and is the point of contact for outside agencies that perform audits or reviews of the departments various programs.

Accomplishments:

- Performed case reviews of child support cases for all 31 judicial districts. Prepared the IV-D Self-Assessment Annual Report.
- Performed monthly reviews of long distance calls usage. Investigated unusual and non-business related calls.
- Performed safeguard reviews of Judicial District offices as required by IRS Publication 1075.
- Performed year-end inventory. Responded to 38 Hotline calls.
- Reviewed Families First Car Repair Program and Transportation Program.

Investigations**Accomplishments**

- Collected a record \$8,453,920 in overpayments in the food stamp and TANF programs (22% increase over the previous record year).
- Prepared 17,293 claims. A new record representing an 11% increase over the previous record year.
- Closed 23,000 cases in which no claim was discovered.

- Conducted 5,000+ criminal background checks for child care providers. Discovered 600+ individuals with serious felony records working in the child care industry.

The Office of General Counsel

Bill Russell, General Counsel

The State Office and District level offices provide legal advice to the Department's programs regarding the impact of Federal and State laws and regulations on program operations. The Litigation Section Offices in Knoxville, Dandridge, Nashville, and Memphis provide legal representation in courts, and in administrative hearings. In addition, the State Office General Counsel staff provides legislative analysis, tracking and representation for the Department before the Tennessee General Assembly.

Accomplishments:

- Litigation Division provided legal services in over 900 cases in Fiscal Year 2001.
- Obtained over \$480,000 in judgments involving assistance overpayments issued by the Department or other funds owed to the Department.

Information Systems

Bob Bumbalough, Assistant Commissioner

Accomplishments:

- The SSI/SSA mass change process automatically applies all daily and monthly SSA and SSI updates from the Social Security Administration, adjusting ACCENT, Food Stamps, TANF and Medicaid cases as appropriate to generate and mail detailed client notices. The need for manual actions by case-workers and the potential for error have been eliminated. Information Systems Analyst Supervisor Audrey Timberlake, received statewide recognition for leading the project.
- ACCENT report functionality was modified to process and automate the new Federal directives for

TANF Federal High Performance Completion Bonuses.

- ACCENT was modified to track Families First customers' eligibility for and receipt of various Families First Completion Bonuses, generating associated client notices and administrative reports.

- Corrections and enhancements were made to Child Support referrals generated by ACCENT, resulting in improved collection and distribution of Child Support payments.

- The Claims On-line Tracking System (COTS) was modified to include the new Treasury Offset Program (TOP) functionality.

- The Tennessee Child Care Management System (TCCMS) was modified to include Sponsoring Organization functionality.

- A new Child Care Provider Directory Web Site was launched.

- Installed personal computers or thin clients for all Family Assistance staff who previously used Telex devices. User training was provided to all staff.

Administrative Review**Accomplishments:**

- Received 3,000 appeals for fair hearings from applicants or recipients of assistance who were dissatisfied with actions taken by the DHS.
- Received 745 requests for Administrative Disqualification Hearings.
- Reviewed 3,054 Food Stamp and Medicaid cases to meet federal QC regulations.
- 35 Management Evaluation reviews were conducted for the Food Stamp program.